R E P O R T  R E S U M E S

ED 018 847 EA 001 221

CURRENT PROBLEMS WITHIN THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

BY- LAMBERT, SAM M.

PUB DATE 14 NOV 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.76 17P.

DESCRIPTORS- *TEACHER EMPLOYMENT, *PROBLEMS, TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS, TEACHER SALARIES, *TEACHER MORALE, PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION, *TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS, TEACHER STRIKES, BUREAUCRACY, DECENTRALIZATION, EDUCATIONAL PLANNING, PERSONNEL SELECTION, TEACHER RECRUITMENT, FEDERAL AID, TEACHER SHORTAGE, POLICY FORMATION, CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, *COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATION, SAN JUAN, N.E.A.,

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS HELD NOVEMBER 14, 1967, IN SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO, THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION DEFINED MAJOR FACTORS TO WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED UNREST AMONG TEACHERS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS. THESE FACTORS INCLUDE RAPIDLY INCREASING SCHOOL ENROLLMENT, CONSEQUENT SOCIAL DISTANCE BETWEEN CLASSROOM TEACHER AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR, INCREASING PROFESSIONALISM OF MALE TEACHERS, INADEQUATE COMPENSATION BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY, GROWING BUREAUCRACY, AND OVERCENTRALIZATION. PROBLEM-SOLVING SUGGESTIONS INCLUDE A COOPERATIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE REPRESENTING ADMINISTRATION, TEACHING STAFF, AND PARENTS, A BROADER RESPONSIBILITY BASE FOR STAFF RECRUITMENT, AND LOCAL CONTROL OVER BASIC DECISIONS AFFECTING THE PROGRAM OF THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS PROJECTED AS NECESSARILY BECOMING A FULL THIRD PARTNER IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL ENTERPRISE. NINE AREAS OF ACTION ARE OUTLINED WHEREIN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION WILL SEEK TO ENGAGE IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED TO THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS ANNUAL MEETING (SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO, NOVEMBER 14, 1967). (JK)

ED018847

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

EA 001 221

COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS ANNUAL MEETING
San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 14, 1967

# Current Problems Within the Teaching Profession

Sam M. Lambert, Executive Secretary
National Education Association

In 1962 Dr. William G. Carr, my predecessor, stood before the delegates assembled at the NEA Convention in Denver and gave a stirring address which he called "The Turning Point." He described how the National Education Association had encountered and survived four major turning points in the last four decades. He then explained that the fifth turning point was now facing the organized profession. The new crisis, he said, is twofold: the problem of urbanization and the problem of unionization.

The public school systems were having real problems in trying to cope with the social and cultural changes in the big cities. We were failing to adapt soon enough to new conditions and new needs. And, in many respects we are still failing. The AFL-CIO seized upon and used this failure to attempt to offset the declining membership in industrial and trade unions. The labor strategy was to attack the establishment: the board of education, the superintendent's office, and in some cases the school principals. And whether you know it or not, the comprehensive professional organization in the big city was also considered part of the so-called "establishment." The real tactic was to label anything we had had for 40 years as bad and to claim that any change would be for the better. The AFL-CIO poured money into the AFT and many teachers bought the idea that things couldn't get any worse--so why not try something different.

Before his retirement last year, Dr. Carr was fully aware of the significance of the turning point. The profession had taken a sharp turn. NEA had moved rapidly toward an action-packed program and toward involvement in all the battles

going on throughout the country. It was the beginning of a new ball game with new rules. Our traditional idea of the sanctity of public employment just didn't work out according to the textbooks. American education was in for some big and dramatic changes. Looking toward the future, educators who can't change with the times are going to be about as productive as a salesman of Packard automobiles.

Since school began this year, I can count on my fingers the number of days when we haven't had a major school crisis somewhere in the United States. We have had explosions all the way from Paducah, Kentucky, to Broward County, Florida; from Lancaster, Ohio, to Randolph, Massachusetts. The National Education Association has had at least 35 affiliates on strike this school year. And, of course, all of you know about the Florida sanctions and the direct involvement of the National Education Association. Here we faced a massive conflict between the no tax policy of the governor and a rapidly growing state school system with critical and immediate needs. To demonstrate their solidarity, 35,000 Florida teachers traveled from all over the state to meet, in the Tangerine Bowl in Orlando, to voice their complaints and show their support for the program set forth by the Florida Education Association. When the leaders of that Association stood up and said that they intended to stand firm behind their requests--to the point that it might be necessary for every teacher in the state to resign--the teachers stood and cheered for 10 minutes. The teachers felt that they and their children and the schools were getting a bad deal, and they were determined to do something about it.

Unless the conditions and circumstances that have created the problems can be corrected, the American public can look next year to an increase in teacher activity and aggressiveness. The wave of trouble with teachers this fall--the strikes, mass resignations, special meetings, and demonstrations--is just a preview of big trouble in years ahead. If you want to worry about something, this problem is worth a little loss of sleep for everyone.

Factors Causing Unrest in American Schools

There is a great deal of misunderstanding of why teachers are so militant at present. There are those who think of these troubles as a reflection of the program of the teachers' union, and the concurrent jurisdictional fight between the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers. Others say it is being caused by a group of young radicals trying to wrest control of the schools from the duly elected authorities. Both of these views are superficial in my opinion. I believe the current unrest among teachers is a natural response to a combination of a number of forces in our society.

In the first place, our public school enrollments are growing rapidly. Between 1930 and 1967 our pupil population increased from 26 million to 44 million. This is only part of the picture. While our elementary school population was increasing from 21 million to 32 million, our high school population increased from 5 to 12 million, and it costs more--about one and one half times as much--to educate a high school pupil as an elementary school pupil. The pressures of numerical growth and higher costs have created massive strains on everyone involved. Today's school system is larger and more

impersonal. The distance between the classroom teacher and the administrator is greater. In larger school systems we tend to have less confidence in one another. We really don't know each other. We communicate in writing where formerly a teacher and administrator could iron out problems on a face-to-face basis. With growth has come the inevitable bureaucracy with all its ills and problems. Education by its very nature is a highly personal activity and ill-suited to many of the trappings of sheer bigness. Teachers have lost their identity in the total education enterprise; their relationships with pupils have been subverted to things less important. The superintendent has ceased to be an individual--he is a name on the bottom of a memorandum.

The most significant change, however, has been in the teacher himself. This new breed of teacher we have been talking about can be characterized in several ways. He is younger, better educated, more active, and more courageous. Whereas, only 60 percent of the teachers in the 1947-48 school year had degrees, the proportion has grown to near 95 percent. Thirty-three percent of the men and 17 percent of the women now have master's degrees. Also, the percentage of men in teaching has increased to the point that approximately one-third of all teachers now are males. In fact, men now out-number women in the secondary schools. The teacher of today, I believe, is more career-oriented and looks upon himself as being different. He is more competent and, therefore, more responsible.

As one state executive secretary has said, "No longer do these teachers consider teaching to be a calling separate and apart from the mainstream of American life. It is no longer some

kind of monastic order that sustains its breath on early vows of dedication. To the hundreds of thousands of young men and women who have swelled our ranks in recent years, determination is more important than dedication. These young people are determined to do an effective job of teaching. They identify education as a great force for social betterment and when needed resources or support fail to come their way, they are not content to swallow their private dreams and personal pride.

They do not intend to merely hold down a teaching job. They insist on doing the job. Unquestioning dedication to them is a contradiction in terms."

## What Do Teachers Want?

There are two things I think teachers want. First, they want a better economic break in this era of electric toothbrushes. Second, they want to change conditions that make effective teaching impossible.

The economic condition of many teachers is terrible. A few examples can illustrate this:

1. I know a high school mathematics teacher, who has a university degree and 35 years of classroom experience. At age 60 he is paid $5400 a year. This teacher figures that by age 65 he will still be making less than $6000. He is not looking forward to the problems of living on a retirement income of approximately $175 per month. This is a pretty modest return from society for 40 years of service, and after getting some 90 boys into West Point, Annapolis, and the Air Academy. This teacher is not just a good teacher; he is a great teacher.

2. This fall we had a lot of trouble in Paducah, Kentucky. The Board was paying a starting salary of $98 per week and the teachers wanted $103. For a teacher with a master's degree and the maximum experience, the Board was paying $133; the teachers wanted $139. The teachers refused to wait, and frankly I don't blame them.

3. According to our latest surveys, 57 percent of the men in public elementary and secondary schools are still moonlighting to make ends meet. In recent years, these men simply left teaching for something else that would provide the basic necessities for a wife and one or two children. Today, they'd rather fight than switch--at least to switch to something far less important than teaching.

I would be the last to underrate the importance of improved salaries for teachers, but I also know that salaries don't provide the solution to all our problems. Dr. Redefer, professor of education, New York University, who is considered one of the nation's leading authorities on teacher morale research has made the following statement:

"Although studies have found no single factor determining lower morale status, findings have questioned the belief that the status of teaching morale is wholly an economic matter. In other words, the statement 'there is nothing wrong with teacher morale that money cannot cure' is not borne out by research." This finding simply confirms something we've learned many times in business and industry.

It is obvious, of course, that since salary increases are a tangible and appealing objective, teachers usually mobilize around the money problem as a central pivot for building an effective and cohesive organization, but their

underlying motive may be the quest for respect, responsibility, and identity. They want to be important and they want to be treated as important. They want to have their say about things that concern them. Above all, they want to be treated as competent, self-respecting professionals. Let me cite some examples:

- Teachers do not, in my experience, have a significant or meaningful role in selecting the major tools with which they work--textbooks, workbooks, and other basic essentials. A teacher frequently assumes, and rightfully so, that someone up the line has no respect for his professional judgement.
- Is a teacher being treated as a self-respecting professional when he is given a 30-minute lunch period during which he is expected to supervise the eating habits of 300 students? You may not believe this but the duty-free lunch period is of tremendous importance to teachers. Every time I mention the subject I get more applause than I do on any other subject.
- What happens when teachers have a real grievance and present a carefully prepared, well-documented case to the superintendent or the board of education? Is the net result a recital of the law, referral to a committee, or a reminder of "devotion to duty" and "glories of the profession?"

> Of all the treatment accorded teachers, the paternalistic attitude is the most irritating to them. Too frequently we deal with teachers the same way we deal with high school students.

Teachers have, in short, a kind of one-dimensional professionalism--professional responsibility without professional authority.

## Are Teachers Professional?

Some people say teachers are now acting unprofessional. Let's examine this point of view for a few moments. I believe that in the past we have often defined professionalism with the following kinds of statements:

- A professional person is blindly loyal
- A professional person is one who never talks back or questions his superiors
- A professional person never lets the public know what is wrong with the school
- A professional person is one who makes do with whatever he has.

Dr. Ronald G. Corwin, in a recent study conducted at Ohio State University, has made the following statement: "At least in publicly supported vocations like teaching, professionalism encourages militancy because the increased autonomy over work demanded by professionals will be resisted by strong American traditions of lay control and the entrenched power of administrators."

If professionalism or the professional person is described as one who is acquiescent, then to be controversial

or to express a different point of view is being unprofessional. But if a professional person is one who is attempting to seek a greater control over his work, or to become more specialized, or better educated, or more committed to his work--if this is what we mean by professional--then professionalism is indeed militant.

Position of NEA

Now, in these battles over decent salary schedules, sanctions, and the rights of teachers as professionals and careerists, I want you to know where NEA stands. The Association stands solidly behind these teachers when, in our opinion, they are right. We shall use all our resources--financial and otherwise--to help them.

Sometimes we are able to serve both sides to a controversy with considerable effect. In these cases we play the role of advisor, negotiator, mediator, and middleman. In other cases, all our efforts are aimed at helping teachers get what they and we know they deserve. And, if I know we are right, I'm not going to lose any sleep over what anyone says about us.

At present, there is some confusion over NEA's position on strikes. Let me say that NEA does not advocate or advise the strike as a method of settling arguments. Our position is that the proper use of good faith negotiation, fact-finding, mediation, and arbitration should make strikes unnecessary. Yet we know that regardless of what we do,or say, or advise, strikes have occurred in the past and will occur in the future. Our present policy permits us to help a state or local unit when negotiations break down, deterioration sets in,

and finally a work stoppage of some type occurs. In short, we don't advise or call a strike, but we can help a local association when it needs help, even if it is in a strike situation.

Some Problems Needing Attention

I would like to spend the last few minutes of my time highlighting two major areas of concern--areas in which the NEA will be increasingly interested in the years ahead.

Bureaucracy

As mentioned before, one of our most difficult and baffling problems in public education is to find a way to keep sheer bureaucracy from stifling the creative work of schools and teachers. We must find a way to not only permit but encourage schools and individual teachers to be different, to depart from the norm, to try out and learn from new plans, to use their own imagination in meeting the unique needs of the children and the areas they serve.

Bureaucracy, like sin, is a favorite whipping boy of politicians. In education, however, it's not a straw man. It literally strangles our schools. What does it mean and what is its form in public education? It means these and many other things:

- The standard process of failing to distribute textbooks until schools in the fall have been underway for two or three days and collecting them several days before school is out in the summer. The central office, and this is especially

true in the larger cities, doesn't want to lose any of the precious three- or four-dollar books, but in many cases we are penny-wise and pound-foolish. The possible loss of 5 percent of the textbooks is infinitesimal as compared with the probable loss of between 2 and 3 percent of the annual cost of instruction.

- Bureaucracy means a requisition in triplicate, approved by three persons on its way to the central office. It means a week's time to secure a film from the teaching materials center, three weeks to get a toilet repaired, two days to get a box of chalk, a full semester sometimes just to find and get delivery on a $10 item.
- It means the central office recruiting and employing all personnel and handing a staff to a principal without any regard to the personality mix of the present staff. It also means assigning a teacher who has already failed in three schools to another principal rather than face the unpleasant task of telling the person he doesn't belong in teaching.

Can we find a way to fight our way out of some of this red tape and over-centralization in order to personalize and humanize education? I don't have all the answers, but I am sure we need to decentralize a large part of the planning, the program, the staffing, and the authority and responsibility.

Let me set forth a few rather specific suggestions:

1. Each school should have a planning committee representative of the principal's office, the teaching staff, and the parents in the area served. This should be a long-range group, working year by year on what this school should be like and doing five or ten years from now. Periodically, it should have an opportunity to present its plans, ideas, and needs to the superintendent and board of education. The public doesn't give a hoot about the state department of education or the local school board. What's important to John Doe is his elementary or secondary school sitting in the middle of his neighborhood.

2. Responsibility for recruitment and staffing should rest largely with the principal, counselors, and a small group of classroom teachers in the school. This group should have wide latitude in deciding who fits in, who provides a talent or capability now missing on the staff, and, in general, building the best staff it can build. The school staff should also carry responsibility for whatever selections they make--to help the beginner, to get him started off right, to make him succeed if possible, and finally, to get rid of a mistake. There is no adequate substitute for a marriage between authority and responsibility. There should be more of both in the individual schools of the United States.

3. The principal, his staff, and the people of the community should have some freedom to make some of the important basic decisions about the program of the individual school. We should not only permit but force on the school the responsibility for meeting the real needs of the school neighborhood. And, not only that, we should

stress more and more "accountability" for meeting real needs.

## The Federal Role in Financing Education

The Johnson administration and leadership in the Congress up to this time have viewed the federal role in education as one of strengthening only certain specific areas of the curriculum in which there is a strong national interest,-- a national interest growing out of national defense, poverty, health, employment, and so on. The federal establishment has also sliced out for itself leadership in the field of innovation in public education. Its assumption is that local and state boards of education, school superintendents, and the rest of the education establishment is traditional, conservative, and incapable of change without being pushed or shown how.

I shall admit there is a special national interest in education that has to be served. It is also true that the education establishment needs at least a little nudging toward research and innovation, even though few school systems have ever had the kind of money now being funneled through the Office of Education to finance the foward look in education.

The basic arguments between NEA and the federal establishment are over whether we need a limited or a total war on the problems of education and over who should make the decisions on what's really important.

As I view the situation, the federal government is going to have to become a full third partner in the public school enterprise, providing as much as one-third of the operating

costs within not over ten years. This, I am sure, will come. Unfortunately, the federal government has to go through the same experience the states went through back in the 1930's in learning they had to become the real second partner in supporting schools.

I also think local and state governments will seek and get the right to decide how a large part of the federal government's money should be spent. It took the states a long time to reach the same decision when they began to help local districts, but I hope the procedure won't be as slow this time.

As far as I am concerned, it doesn't make much sense to invest money in a high school foreign language laboratory when the really big failure is in second and third grade reading. It makes even less sense to invest in a new high school math program, including an abundance of equipment, when the salary schedule won't attract or keep a qualified math teacher.

The single most serious problem in education is the shortage of highly qualified manpower. We have had a real shortage ever since the beginning of World War II, 26 years ago. There are plenty of teachers in the United States today, but they are not in the classroom. If we could find a way to raise the average salary from $6900 to $10,000 or about $3100, we'd solve the teacher shortage overnight. Nothing short of this will make teaching really competitive with other college trained professional groups.

The NEA has supported ESEA, NDEA, and other programs and we will continue to support and help improve these programs. Our big push in the future, however, will be

for general aid--money that can be used for just about anything that is needed and with what is needed being decided by regularly constituted education authorities.

And this time we are going to organize our one million members into a real political force--a force with a voice that is going to be heard loud and clear in every congressional district in this nation. And, we are not stopping with the states and congressional districts. This organization is going to reach down into every school district and every individual school in this country. We are going where the votes are. I am optimistic about the political power of the organized profession; we can win when we are organized for political impact and this time we are going to be organized.

NEA and the Future

NEA last year had 1,030,000 members; by the end of this year we will have at least 1,100,000. Within 10 years our membership will exceed 2,000,000, and the great majority of these with undivided loyalties. They will be members of the profession at all levels--national, as well as state and local. We are already four times as large as any other professional organization in this country. Within a few years we will be six or seven times as large. And, beginning now, we are going to put our power and influence to work for the things that are most important:

- NEA will become a stronger and more influential advocate of social changes long overdue
- NEA will be unrelenting in seeking a better economic break for teachers in this affluent

society. Our job is more important than that of a construction worker and we intend to make it pay better.

- NEA will become a political power second to no other special interest group. The farm bloc may take a back seat to the education bloc within the very near future.
- NEA will insist that the profession at all levels have a voice in the formulation of educational policy, in curriculum change, and in educational planning. We will continue our drive for negotiation rights for teachers.
- Through its research it will continue to serve as a sounding board for teacher opinion and as a voice for the teachers on every important issue
- NEA will have more and more to say about how a teacher is educated, whether he should be admitted to the profession, and depending on his behavior and ability whether he should stay in the profession.
- NEA will expand and improve its program of economic benefits of membership. Our life insurance program, our accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and our mutual fund will become bigger and better, and new kinds of benefits are already on the planning board.
- NEA will continue to defend and protect any teacher, principal, or superintendent in the country whos civil and professional rights

are being challenged or denied.

- And, finally, NEA will organize this profession from top to bottom into logical operational units that can move swiftly and effectively and with power unmatched by any other organized group. We will be going all out to build the local association into a fast moving, hard-hitting organization.

The NEA is already moving for better education. I have great confidence in our ability to build a strong, more action-oriented profession. The teachers want it--the schools need it--the children deserve it.

The big question going around the country is: Is Sam Lambert going to rock the boat? The answer is yes.

* * *